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# This Nonprofit Vet Caters to Pets, Low-Income Owners

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Photo Courtesy Pets in Need

By Courtney Gabrielson

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[Pets in Need](#), a provider of high-quality veterinary care for low-income owners, is celebrating a big milestone this year.

It's been serving the Greater Cincinnati community for five years, and for Ann Hill, Pets in Need's executive director, this anniversary means a whole lot.

"Our clients are so grateful that we're here from them," Hill said. "We're different from most animal welfare agencies in that we help both people and pets."

"We think that everyone should have a pet."

She discussed its clients, citing elderly patients whose cat or dog is their "whole life," or homeless folks who find treatment in Pets in Needs office.

"It's very gratifying to see it," she added.

The nonprofit, "the only of its kind in Greater Cincinnati," exclusively serves those clients who are living at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty limit.

"We're not a rescue, we're not a shelter, we don't house animals," Hill said. "We're there just to serve those people who are having a hard time affording their pets."

It's an integral service.

"There are naysayers that say, 'You can't afford [pets], don't have 'em,'" she continued. "But we're the opposite: we think that everyone should have a pet."

The nonprofit has been a hit. Clients (and their animals) come from 127 zip codes throughout 15 counties in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. In 2017 alone, it conducted 5,442 vet exams and provided 535 spay or neuter vouchers.

Clients like the thousands who were served last year apply to use Pets in Need services. The process begins with an in-person conversation between the interested client and the Pets in Need staff. Then, customers would have to provide proof that their income qualified for the service.

When that's done, customers will get an ID card that's usable at Pets in Need for a year, allowing the holders to make appointments with the nonprofit's vets. They provide services like treatment for minor health issues, vaccinations, vouchers for spay and neutering procedures and recommendations for other providers should the pets require more elaborate care (think surgeries or X-rays).

Pets in Need's current level of service was a spin out of a two-days-a-year event in Cincy, where volunteers would provide vaccines for animals who needed them. It was a huge success.

"It was the only resource of any kind at that time," Hill said.

In 2009, the team got a grant to help expand their work to a Sunday clinic model. While it was successful, in 2011 the board decided to end the program.

Hill was shocked. "It's so needed there could be one on every corner," she said.

So, the team established a new board, formerly creating Pets in Need in 2013. Later that year, they raised money and built an official clinic.

Hill credited the [Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust](#) in Cleveland for help getting them started.

"If not for them, we wouldn't be here," she said. "We had an angel on our shoulder; the stars aligned [and] some generous people [helped]."

Currently, Pets in Need is run by a mix of paid staff and volunteers, and the team is thinking big about what the next five years could bring the organization.

"We are starting to have that discussion as a board," Hill said. "We'll probably to start with: expand the clinic and remodel; plans are in the works for that."

Ultimately, however, the plan remains the same: caring for pets and their owners.

"We've never turned an animal down that's come through our doors," Hill said.



Photo Courtesy Pets in Need.

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